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DEPARTMENT FOR OES/OPA LISA PHELPS
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SUBJECT: RUSSIA AGREES WITH U.S. POSITIONS ON INTERNATIONAL WHALING
COMMISSION

REF: STATE 57020

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1. (SBU) SUMMARY: One of Russia's two representatives to the International Whaling Commission (IWC) told Post that Russia fully supports U.S. positions for the upcoming IWC meeting in Madeira. Specifically, the government of Russia (GOR) favors continuing the "Future of the IWC" process to reach a consensus package, restricting NGO and other outside participation to an observer role, and limiting the number of countries involved in IWC meetings. The delegation has not yet decided whom to support for the positions of IWC Chair and Vice-Chair. END SUMMARY.

2. (SBU) On June 5, Vasiliy Titushkin of the MFA Legal Department, one of Russia's two representatives to the IWC, told Post's Environment Specialist that Russia fully agrees with U.S. positions for the upcoming IWC meeting. Russia's second commissioner, Valentin Ilyashenko of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Ecology, is already in Madeira for the IWC meeting and could not be reached for comment. Titushkin did not yet know whether he would attend the meeting.

3. (SBU) Titushkin said that the GOR favors continuing the "Future of the IWC" discussions with the aim of achieving a consensus package. He added that if a other IWC members can agree on a compromise solution, Russia will not block it. Russia supports continuing the IWC's work, especially its role in preserving aboriginal subsistence whaling.

4. (SBU) Titushkin noted that Russia favors limiting the role of NGOs and other outside observers in IWC meetings. The IWC should remain an intergovernmental organization, he said, in accordance with its original purpose. He said that some NGOs have actively interfered in the decision-making process and have tried to force their opinions upon governments. However, he said, Russia is not opposed to an observer role for NGOs, as long as it does not involve active participation.

5. (SBU) Russia favors limiting the number of countries that participate in IWC discussions. Titushkin commented that, as a rule, decisions should be made by a smaller working group of the most influential countries and those with a vested interest in a given discussion. Wider participation greatly increases the complexity of the process.

6. (SBU) Russia still has no favored candidates for the positions of IWC Chair and Vice-Chair. Titushkin explained that the Russian delegation will decide at the meeting whom to support based upon the results of discussions.

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